

Yeshua Instructs His Emissaries on Their Mission ~ Part 3 To Be Like Yeshua Means – To Affirm Others

In my last post, we looked at Yeshua's instructions on where the emissaries would stay, as well as other practical tips for their training mission. In this post, we continue to explore Yeshua's instructions to the emissaries from Mathew 10.

Yeshua invested Himself in the development of others, particularly the Twelve. He gave them responsibility and authority, resisting the temptation to get the job done *right* by doing it Himself. Of course, He gave them adequate preparation before sending them out, and on their return He affirmed them on their successful completion of the mission. Yeshua calls us to help other grow. If we want to be like Him, we will share the joy and risks of working together with our brothers and sisters.

"Be on guard, for there will be people who will hand you over to the local Sanhedrins and flog you in their synagogues. On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as a testimony to them and to the Goyim. But when they bring you to trial, do not worry about what to say or how to say it; when the time comes, you will be given what you should say. For it will not be just you speaking, but the Spirit of your heavenly Father speaking through you. A brother will betray his brother to death, and a father his child; children will turn against their parents and have them put to death. Everyone will hate you because of me, but whoever holds out till the end will be preserved from harm. When you are persecuted in one town, run away to another. Yes indeed; I tell you, you will not finish going through the towns of Isra'el before the Son of Man comes." ~ Matthew 10:17-23

Prepare to Be Persecuted

Yeshua told the emissaries that ***when*** (not "if") they were arrested and handed over to the authorities, they should not worry about what to say in their defense. The thought of being brought before Gentile rulers terrified any Jew, but Yeshua warned His emissaries not to be afraid. ***"What to say or how to say it; when the time comes"*** - God's Spirit would speak to you. The phrase ***"Spirit of your heavenly Father"*** is language that recalls the inspiration of the prophets. Yeshua described the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit) as a defense lawyer coming to the emissaries' aid. This promise of an infilling of the Ruach HaKodesh was fulfilled in Acts 2, where the Spirit empowered the emissaries to speak. Some mistakenly think this means Believers do not have to prepare to present the Gospel because God will take care of everything. Scripture teaches, however, that we are to make carefully prepared, thoughtful statements. ***"Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person."*** ~ Colossians 4:6^(ESV) Yeshua was telling His followers to prepare but not to worry. He promised special inspiration for times of great need.

Yeshua detailed some aspects of the coming persecution. The Jews considered family denunciations and betrayals a sign of the end times. These words may allude to Micah 7:6, ***"For a son insults his father, a daughter rises against her mother, daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law —a person's enemies are the members of His own household."*** This passage speaks of internal corruption in Israel; Yeshua said this was a sign of the last days. Not only will faith in Yeshua tear families apart, but Believers will also find that ***"Everyone will hate you because of Me."*** As Yeshua's emissaries share His authority, they will also share His sufferings.

While Yeshua told the emissaries to expect persecution, he also warned them against foolhardiness. If they faced persecution in one town, they were to ***run away*** to the next. They ought not cast their pearls before swine (Matthew 7:6), nor should they abort their ministry in fear. They were to leave and move on if the

persecution became too great. Perhaps this is part of being *"shrewd as snakes"* that we read in chapter 10:16.

Persecution was a regular experience of the early messianic movement. The emissary Sha'ul faced intense persecution. He fled Damascus by going down over the wall in a basket (see Acts 9:25). After being stoned and left for dead outside of Lystra, Sha'ul got up and moved on to Derbe (see Acts 14:19-20). Persecution did not halt the mission of the early messianic; in many instances, it forced the Believers to move out into the world to spread the Gospel (Acts 11:19).

"Yes indeed; I tell you, you will not finish going through the towns of Isra'el before the Son of Man comes." This is one of those hard sayings of the Bible. Here are five possible interpretations:

1. Some have understood this to focus on the immediate context of verses 5-16. The emissaries would not have time to go through all the towns before Yeshua would catch up with them. This interpretation is too simple, however, given the language in the text that refers to events after the resurrection of Messiah. At the time of Matthew's writing, the emissaries had completed the mission, so Yeshua obviously was referring to something else.
2. Some suggest that the coming of the Son of Man refers to His coming judgment against the Jews, fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem in CE 70. But it is an unlikely interpretation to connect the destruction of Jerusalem with the return of the Son of Man.
3. Albert Schweitzer made this the key to His interpretation of Yeshua, explaining that Yeshua expected the end of time to happen before the emissaries finished this mission. When it did not happen, said Schweitzer, Yeshua switched to a more active role and tried to force it to come through His crucifixion. This view misinterprets Yeshua's words to apply only to the immediate context (as does number 1 above).
4. Still others explain that the "coming" refers to Yeshua's appearance in triumph after His resurrection.
5. Because of the events of the book of Acts, it seems more likely that Yeshua was referring to events after His resurrection. The meaning of His words would be that the task of the mission to the Jews would be so great and so difficult (for many would refuse to believe) that it would not be accomplished even by the time of His second coming.

What lessons can we take away from verses 17-23?

1. Let the servants of Messiah in all their trials remember their mission. It is He who sends us and He will give us strength.
2. We should be prudent; we must be sincere and truthful in our testimony of Yeshua.
3. Let us expect opposition and persecution; Messiah has warned us.
4. We must not be over-anxious how to speak; we must trust; we must look for the promised help of the Ruach.
5. We must work where God's providence sends them. We must bear the execution-stake now, looking onward to the crown.

In my next post, we will conclude our mini-series on affirming others.